

**Floor Statement for Congressman John Conyers Jr.  
H.R. 4437, the "Border and Immigration Enforcement  
Act of 2005"**

**Thursday, December 15, 2005**

Let me say at the outset that Democrats believe that a strong border security policy is an absolute necessity for this Nation. We must ensure that terrorist do not simply walk into this country and lurk in the shadows of our society until they attack our people.

Simply put, we need to know who is trying to get into our country and we need to know who is already here. Without some mechanism for people who are here illegally to come forward and have a path to legalization, we will have a gigantic hole in our border security.

But this bill is mostly not about border security. On a largely bipartisan basis, the Homeland Security Committee passed a border security bill. This bill includes those provisions, but uses them to bootstrap on anti-immigrant legislation that has nothing to do with security at the border. Yet again, the Republican Party is using the fears of terrorism that Americans have in this uncertain, post-September 11<sup>th</sup> world to piggy-back its anti-immigrant agenda onto a border security proposal.

We do not need to adopt policies of jailing, deporting, and criminalizing immigrants to protect ourselves from the real threats of terrorism. More importantly, we are giving the American people a false sense of security if we tell them a bill like H.R. 4437 will help keep them safe.

Repeatedly, over the last decade, the Republican-controlled House has passed one immigration or border enforcement bill after another.

Yet the tide of unlawful immigrants entering this country continues to rise, then disappear into a shadowy unknown society. Republicans will pass a policy that pretends to be tough on security and enforcement, then they refuse to fund the policies year after year.

We do not sanction employers who hire unauthorized immigrant workers. Only three employers in the entire country were sanctioned last year for using unlawful labor. We are unable to detain or deport everyone here unlawfully. We don't know who has come, who has gone, or who is dangerous. We have done nothing to bring the 11 million unlawfully present immigrants out of the shadows.

The immigration enforcement and border security policy in this bill is untenable and impossible. Please tell us how much this will cost? Will the Republican Congress actually pay for these reforms or underfund them like everything else? How will we pay for it – are you willing you give up just a tiny bit of tax cuts for the wealthy to secure our borders? And how will these policies solve our problems when we cannot “catch and detain” every unlawfully present immigrant under this bill?

Instead of reforming our immigration system to improve border security and effectively and realistically address undocumented immigration, this bill further destroys the system. This bill is simply a non-starter.

Bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform supported by mainstream America is the correct and realistic approach to border security. We need a comprehensive new policy which builds upon our moral values and economic priorities a nation of immigrants and refugees. A vote for this bill betrays the promise of America.